

Beyond Ballot Box: How Can We Save Nigeria?

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Chapter Fifteen

Beyond Ballot Box: How Can We Save Nigeria?

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Introduction

Ballot Box is a means to an end but not an end in itself. This is more so in the young democracies, especially in the developing world. Issues surrounding the formation, funding of political parties has been preoccupied with the microscopic-molecular process of human material. Like most countries in Africa particularly Nigeria, the corridor of power has been saturated by various autocratic leadership in spite of the unquantifiable quest for democracy and democratic processes. The most crucial and critical challenges have been how campaigns rallies are designed and pursued. Post ballot benefits are mostly shattered right at the processes of the campaign. As a follow-up to results from the ballot box, elected officials become mischief makers and blackmailers. Hence, the course of governance is turned out to be something else. Sequel to these trends, Academics, Professional bodies, Captains of industries and civil society groups have a lot to offer to the project of Nigeria as a nation-state. Democracy as art and process of governance is still preoccupied with chain and series of irregularities. Political parties are essential features of

the democratic arrangement, especially election through the Ballot box. Over the years' political participation particularly securing votes from ballot box continue to a stumbling block in Nigeria's body polity. These problems range from excessive state control, interference, application of the unpopular, often crude method of securing votes and many unfavorable conditions.

Virtually, a large proportion of there is administrative inefficiencies including voter registration exercises have been plagued by confusion delays and abuses of various dimension. The user of the ballot box is widely known and accepted as a model for stability. However, keen observers attest that the stability of a nation does not in any way starts and ends with the ballot box. Academics and related stakeholders in body polity should not be adamant by allowing the members of western societies and elsewhere to analyses our political terrain. Instead germane efforts should continue to take a center stage providing a desirable road map for the country. Thus, this effort requires a variety of political ideas processes and institutions

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to be subjected to serious intellectual moral scrutiny.

Apologists of Ballot box inclined reasoning that Ballot Box is the most credible source for democratic consolidation. Some patriots and the like went ahead to propagate political stagnation and retrogression lies heavily on the ability and otherwise of the use of balloting and the ballot box. To these group of political practitioners posited remedy to the political hopelessness and helplessness, poverty and irrational political views and ideas.

On the contrary, others opined that political atrocities committed under the disguise of the ballot box and endless and have incalculable consequences. For instance, millions of people were innocently or other slaughter in the quest for securing the ballot box. Similarly, moral conscience and good values have eroded. This is more so in the developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. So many militia groups truncated Nigeria's body polity. Statistics of military and paramilitary operations with unquantifiable figures across Nigeria revealed that Ballot Box saga accounts for the motive behind these losses. Security challenges emanating from ethnic and religious and religious banditry of the Boko terrorist are critical in relation to Ballot Box. Vote buying and series of rigging during elections cannot in any disentangle from over-emphasis of the prominent role of the Ballot box. Sequel to these instances, this chapter

attempts to examine the fact Democratic consolidation is beyond Ballot Box.

Ballot Box and Incumbency in Nigeria's Democracy

The doctrine of incumbency takes a center stage after the manipulation of the Ballot box. The elected officials become tyrants' that terrifies the electorates. Spy from the political palace hunt for those on the opposition. The behavior of the incumbent including their spies' approaches electorates as prey and predatory relationship. The national life and the psychic of the people become horrible without formal outlets on violence and intimidation. The elected official formulate rules that will destroy the fortunes of the opposition parties. The elected officials champion what Machiavelli describes as Terror tactics. The members of the ruling party who are at all cost bend to seek for the favor of the incumbency cultivate patronage values and tendencies. The elected officials erect political structures and institutions that they believed can guarantee tenure elongation. The institution becomes hereditary where political wills are carefully documented. New principles are out rightly rejected and scandalized. Natural and social difficulties continue to be propagated against the opposition party. Once in power, the opposition party including the members are systematically devastated.

Post Ballot Box and Dictatorship in Nigeria's Democracy

The Nigerian state after ballot box manipulation increasing put on despotic outfits. The employment of illogical logic to justify dominance and exploitation by using unpatriotic professionals who invoked unpopular decisions at the corridor of power. The collective anger of the people is usually suppressed via oppressive institutions of the military and paramilitary units, after vote-buying, the despots live of inner logic and vision. Amassing of public treasury becomes the order of the day. The despots organize mock elections in order to retain power. The vision of the despot is to make pervasive history in their own way. Intimidation and public assault become so glaring. Power seeking has become an affair of individuals and personalities with neck-cut ambition. Many who for whatever reason could not align with them are always under perpetual harassment and intimidation. Those who can't bear the pain decides to be migrants in other places in Africa or elsewhere. Dictators make citizens be despair and seek for exit route including the Mediterranean Sea. Human trafficking becomes a lucrative business for those who take advantage of a violent situation. Mass protests are multiplying in their numbers. Nigerian citizens are littered everywhere, particularly in the Sahara Desert become a death zone.

Post Ballot Box and Hegemony in Nigeria's Democracy

After political miscarriage from the ballot box, leaders of the ruling party employ the authoritarian style to instill fear by erecting political structures and secured personalities with inter-locking values and networks of all kinds. There are chain and series of regime violence by holding people to ransom through impoverished mechanisms of governance. Policies are designed to for crude and barbaric suppression all the mass protests. Political and socio-cultural issues are fabricated for easy access to imprisonment. By the time their party holds power, the party caucus assumed the status of personnel directors and secretaries. The hire and the firing of compromising party members are systematically eliminated. The Directors and the agents of party in power carry out job analysis and job specification. Any attempt for failing or derail from the party is usually accompanied sanctions depending on the degree of noncompliance. The recruitment panels are trained during a party caucus meeting and symposia. The point of duties of the support is at the state and EXCOS. The performance of the support staff is usually monitored and apprise on a timely basis. Some individuals may not be on the payroll such individuals are only given stipends in case of and failure. The reservoir of the staff is temporarily on the list of delegates. The main mandate of the few rich are the financial wizards who run the business as a real business venture

where profits and turnover are counted based on expertise in vote manipulation including nefarious political activities. The foot soldiers who are delegates keep on renewing and tightening of the belt as the case may be.

Post Ballot and the Rule of Law

After the election, officials particularly the President clamor for propagation for the Rule of Law. Few weeks after the election everyone in the country was made to know that President is above the Law. The point of derail always starts with Executive and Legislative recklessness. The application of the rule received a lot of skepticism. President unduly interferes with court rulings through the back door. The attorney general of the federation including that of the state become a final, thereby interpreting the Law according to the whims and caprices of the President and the governors. The major test on the rule of for example under President Umar Yaradua was on June 14, 2007, was when the Supreme Court restored Mr. Peter Obi as governor of Anambra state-ordered Dr. Uba Andy who had been sworn in as governor just barely two weeks to vacate Government House. In a unanimous decision by seven Judges, the apex concluded that INEC should go on to conduct elections into the office of the Governor. Citing the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, the Supreme Court declared that governor's term of office begins to run from the day he takes the oath of office. In other words, the rhetoric's of rule of law by President

Starts and ends immediately after the siege for Ballot Box.

Similarly, the entire government business becomes a secret between the President and his men. As a matter of tactics, the President meticulously distant himself away from all rumor and waits cautiously to swift away any daring attempt to strife his image. Government Business is always under tea coffee and oversea trips. Political impunity becomes seemingly the tactical approach of the President and his men. Elected officials assigned tasks to themselves instead of the parliamentary provisions. The President becomes the boss of the bosses. The president made necessary attempts to cling to power. Collective conscience becomes pervasively eroded. Individual anarchy becomes prominent. The citizen is always exempted from knowing the local and oversea interests. The government is always in a web of negotiating peace and at the same flushing out those personalities that threatens their ballot box.

Post Ballot and National Policy

After the election in Nigeria, elected officials instead of deeply involved in the systematic effort to shape and sharpen the future of the country and the people through the institutions, parochial issues of the past campaign are usually pursued. Second-year after ballot box, mischievous agenda for next pursuit of votes preoccupied the minds and the institutions are championed, the

government in power could not embark on critical issues and choices that usher in dividends of democratic processes. The regimes have no instrument of governance where public programs and policies could not be pursued. The elected officials have no clear vision to provide a desirable outcome in meeting the yearning and aspirations of the citizens.

The national life and the polity become overheated. National tension and feeling of hysteria dominate the minds of the people. No sense of optimism with means of achieving a collective goal is usually shattered. Social policy is not standardized. Citizens live on hand out under the disguise of welfare and empowerment programs. Community and the family lives are in despair. The youths and destitute are deceived with a filling of forms with little or no improvement in the quality of life.

Pensioners and pension scam are the common problems of citizens served the country in different capacities.

Post Ballot and National Security.

The power seekers abused all the right channels of acquiring power thereby making some citizens to feel being isolated and excluded. Many forms and dimensions of divides continue to increase. Aggrieved are not treated with a sense of mutual understanding. Any to express grievances are followed with the deployment of the military operations. The entire country becomes over

militarized. Any form of opposition is followed by a military operation. The state as a coherent administrative apparatus or body which rules and regulations are embedded turn to be a threat to peace. This is because political peace is prerequisite to other forms of peace. The state is negatively seen in the daily affairs of our national life. Governance is carried out through hash and extensive force and threat.

The Military has been unjustifiably deployed to contravene the collective will of the people. Having known well that the 1999 constitution which provides for the Military to be used in defending Nigeria from external aggression and at the same time maintain territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on the land, sea, and Air. In addition, suppressing civil disorder as may be prescribed by the National Assembly.

The utility and perpetual abuse of the military roles result in two situations. Firstly, the entire life of the people witnesses over Militarization in all nooks and crannies. Secondly, military institutions become dangerously politicized. Hence, the Military as a professional institution lack nationalistic profile becomes very weak. The credibility of earned by Military is subjected to series of questions thereby making the people suspect their operations. There is suspicion by the citizens between national interests and personal interests of the elected officials

especially the Presidency. For example, the Dasuki gate which is still lingering on the political corridor. The military profession is viewed as oppressive apparatus in the hands of the political class.

Post Ballot Box and the Mass Media

Mass Media that is widely known as means of communicating aimed at reaching and involving virtually everyone has become a manipulative arm of government. Instead of the Mass media to oil, and glue the people as citizens become reversible. The media becomes incisive thereby breeding violence in national life. Examples can be drawn from June 12th, 1993, Independent Movement of Biafra (IPOP), Farmers Herder's crises. The authoritarian model of the press is adopted or over the publicized press. The backdrop of the Press made it either a means or instrument of the division of repressive machinery that elected or the mischief-makers to employ it for glutamic motives. The role to establish and maintain stable social order becomes compromised. The press become oppressive and apprehensive to vulnerable groups. Little or less is reported about life chances and life quality. The watchdog role of the press has been downplayed or contravene. Instead of propagating national unity, social divides are encouraged.

Conclusion

One important way of understanding politics is to be seen as a network of activities of people who are related by the authority with respect to all allocations of resources, power, rights, duties, obligations, liberties benefits and sanctions. Therefore, politics become socially manipulated distribution mechanism. These virtues and many more shapes peoples vision understanding and practicing politics. After ballot box exercise the language and intonations of elected officials automatically changed. Both the verbal and nonverbal languages witness yet a new brand of species. All the critical terms and concept in practicing democracy become value-laden. There is little or no clarity the adoption and utility of power resources. Force is always invoked to threaten the opposition. The knowledge of the country is acquired from historical monuments the favors those in power. New ideologies emerged in an attempt to cope with politically threatened circumstance. Differences in views and opinions are viewed with a high sense of skepticism.

Therefore, understanding of trends in politics is influenced by the ideology of those in power. All complex situations are justified and rationalized. Oppositions are targeted including their willingness to accept or reject the outcome of all decisions arrived at. The ordinary people are made or instigated to fight wars. Citizens loosed the sense of

honor that it is the outcome of their votes that brings elected officials in power and forgets the terrifying efforts. Decisions of elected officials are targeted towards those who fought over the ballot box. All articles of faith are brought to bear in order to circumvent any possible threat. Most ordinary people believed that after the ballot box, the game is over. Ironically, the post ballot box marks a new beginning of all forms of political meandering.

In addition, ballot box alone cannot establish and sustain democracy. Unless attitudes via humanitarian ideologies are enforced for collective security for the ballot box to create ample opportunity for citizen's participation and benefits accrued from the political processes. Unless when unemployed youths who are employable are employed. Dividends of democracy can continue to be a mirage when political concepts are practically implemented. Prices of goods must not exceed wages, house rentals must be within the means of all groups.

Hence, social welfare services must be provided to all vulnerable groups in the body polity. Education and educational facilities are provided to all groups and classes. Income and standard of average people must be met. The government should be an empire in regulating productivity of goods and services. The trust of the electorates should not be betrayed. Roads and rail lines are to be constructed for both the rich and the poor. Relative economic independence

should guarantee to the average populace. There must be a transformation from subsistence agriculture to a mechanized one. Priority is to be given to industries that promote capital flow and consolidation. Differences in terms of the distribution of commonwealth between the geopolitical zones must be fundamentally tackled through robust economic policies.

Their manpower is to be provided with skills of entrepreneurship for an increase in cash flow. Control should be made in such a way the Laws and constitutional provisions are upheld for collective interest and will of the populace. New schemes are to be fronted in order to raise the level of income and standard of living. The spirit to serve should permeate national life. Political processes should be mixed with profit maximization syndrome. The educational system to be critically revisited to improve the technological base of the country. Relevant departments and corporate programs are to be put in place to boost scientific discoveries and innovations.

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